

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Robbins Mfg. Inc.

Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Robbins Manufacturing Streamlines Order Processing/Reduces Inventory With Accelerate and Increases Sales with ISO

Client Profile:

Robbins Manufacturing, Inc. (RMI), a provider of custom fabricated metal products and custom powder coating to a wide variety of industries, employs 200 people at its facility in Fall River, Wisconsin.

Situation:

When RMI's largest OEM customer was experiencing substantial growth, they wanted their supplier to grow with them. The truck manufacturer nominated RMI for participation in Accelerate, an innovative, results-focused supplier development initiative of the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Program (WMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, through which OEMs can support key suppliers in starting or continuing their improvement journey.

Solution:

Blending strategic consulting with hands-on assistance, WMEP began by creating a Value Stream Map (VSM) of a specific OEM part, an engine transmission cover. The VSM identified where non-value added activities were occurring and established a baseline Manufacturing Critical-path Time (MCT), the typical amount of calendar time from when an order is created until the first piece of that order is delivered to the customer. The team quickly found room for improvement in the front office, where "Purchase Orders were sitting on people's desks, waiting to be redone or waiting for approval" stated Jim Heathman, RMI General Manager. "We found at least two days (of recovered time) in there." The company utilized Lean Office techniques, to ensure and improve the accuracy and efficiency of information being transmitted to the shop floor.

In the production area, RMI utilized Inventory Reduction, another Lean tool, to get control of their finished goods inventory and reduce Work In Process. "The system for our finished goods inventory has been vastly improved and computerized," said Heathman. By controlling how much work is released to the shop floor and improving capacity planning, "we can better schedule what is actually needed based on customer requirements."

The people at RMI "really accomplished what they set out to do," said Jerry Thiltgen, WMEP portfolio and project manager for Robbins. "They were serious about making the improvements that were identified." RMI also worked with WMEP to become ISO certified. As a result, material moves into production more quickly and efficiently, improving on-time delivery and increasing customer satisfaction. "The thing that makes us different than other fabricators is the speed with which we get things from cradle to grave, from purchase order to ship. We do a lot of things to make sure we expedite that process" said Heathman. And for a company built on giving their customer a quality product at a competitive price, with the highest level of customer service no matter how big or small the job, that's important! As Greg Robbins, RMI's Owner shared, "Whether lead time, quality or price, our focus is really on servicing our customer."

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Results:

Results of Accelerate work:

- Reduced MCT by 36 percent.
- Improved order processing time by 35 percent.
- Reduced finished goods inventory by 20 percent.

Results of ISO Certification:

- Increased sales by \$1.2 million
- Retained sales of \$410,000
- Cost savings of \$62,000

Testimonial:

"It [Accelerate] allowed our people to learn about VSM and Lean. It also helped people working in one department understand how other departments work, and how their actions affect them."

Greg Robbins, Owner